VISIT…

KUBRICK

The Rarity Archive

Photo journalism

Few people know that before he started making movies, Stanley Kubrick was a star photojournalist. In the summer of 1949, Look magazine sent him to Chicago to shoot pictures for a story called "Chicago City of Contrasts."

State Street, Chicago 1949
Original caption: Chicago's theater district, lined with marquees, has been forbidden to show "vulgar" plays. But the strip-tease girls still flourish on West Madison. (Photos by Stanley Kubrick for Look magazine/Library of Congress)

Club, Chicago 1949
(Photos by Stanley Kubrick for Look magazine/Library of Congress)

Lingerie company, Chicago 1949
An undergarment model and secretary at a Chicago lingerie company. (Photos by Stanley Kubrick for Look magazine/Library of Congress)

Traders, Chicago 1949
(Photos by Stanley Kubrick for Look magazine/Library of Congress)

West Side, Chicago 1949
Original caption: A Chicagoan finds place for modest lunch among debris of demolished buildings on west side... (Photos by Stanley Kubrick for Look magazine/Library of Congress)

Apartment building, Chicago 1949
A family prepares dinner in its apartment. (Photos by Stanley Kubrick for Look magazine/Library of Congress)

Pump Room of Ambassador East, Chicago 1949
Original caption: Diners in the fabulous Pump Room of Ambassador East, however, think little of paying $10 for lunch. (Photos by Stanley Kubrick for Look magazine/Library of Congress)

Railroad station, Chicago 1949
(Photos by Stanley Kubrick for Look magazine/Library of Congress)

On viewing any of director Stanley Kubrick's masterpieces, it becomes immediately apparent that extreme care and precision is practiced for each and every frame of his films. This is one of many elements that make Kubrick unique as a director. Many commentators have speculated that this is probably the result of the origins of Kubrick's career: namely, his apprenticeship as a still photographer. Strangely, while this fact is widely known and acknowledged, to my knowledge not a single commentator has ever gone back and blown the dust off of Kubrick's photographic work. This page is an attempt to rectify this situation.

On his thirteenth birthday, Kubrick has told us, his father presented him with his first camera. Kubrick immediately took to photography, and it soon became one of his favorite hobbies. It was while he was still in high school, at age 16, that Kubrick happened to snap a photo of a newsstand owner on the morning following FDR's death. He soon sold the photograph to *Look,* a well-known news and photo magazine in its day, for $25.

Due to his total lack of interest in public school, Kubrick barely managed to finish, and soon found himself out of school and without any prospects for enrollment at the college level. In a fortuitous move which Kubrick has claimed was more an act of generosity than of appreciation for his skill, *Look* decided to employ him as an apprentice photographer. Over the next several years, Kubrick worked as a staff photographer, working on both "grunt" assignments and his own inspirations. It is the latter in which his budding talents can most clearly be detected.

The question now arises: is the theory that Kubrick's cinematic style has its origins in his photography borne out by the facts? Judge for yourself. Most of Kubrick's *Look* work is extremely pedestrian in nature (only to be expected considering the nature of the assignments he was given), but occasionally one of the pieces, particularly his photographic essays, proves interesting. Due to the large volume of work that Kubrick produced for *Look,* I have only included the pieces I think to be of particular interest here.

The most striking thing about the pieces I've included on this page are their subject matter. As you will see, many of them show signs of the same preoccupations which appear in Kubrick's films. Many of them are also extremely funny in an absurd way, also rather like his films.

Unfortunately, these images are not of very high quality as they are taken from microfilm, thus precluding a clear transfer from original to screen.

APRIL, 1945

SOURCES OF LOOK'S PICTURES

8—(2) Columbia Pictures
12, 13—(1, 2) Wide World; (3) Edna Bennett; (4) Ernest Nash; (5, 15, 18) International; (7) Morse-Pix; (8) Keystone; (10) Frank Bauman-LOOK; (11) Sgt. Harold Wright; (12, 19) Acme; (14) Rothstein-FSA; (16, 19) Dorothy Taylor-LOOK; (17) Black Star.
14, 16—Bob Sandberg-LOOK
21—Frank Bauman-LOOK
23 Frank Bauman-LOOK
24—(1) European; (2, 3, 11, 12, 14, 20) Associated Press; (4, 9) International; (5, 6, 7, 8, 13, 15, 18, 17, 19) Acme; (10) Wide World; (12) De Palma-Black Star
26—(1, 2, 3, 11, 18) Associated Press; (3, 4) European; (15, 16, 17) International; (6, 7, 10) Keystone; (9, 12, 16) Acme; (14) Stan Kubrick-
26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33—Bob Sandberg-LOOK
37—Arthur Witman-Black Star
38—Eric Carpenter-Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer
40, 42, 44, 45—Dorothy Taylor-LOOK
47—Alian Grant-Graphic House
50, 51, 52, 53—Harold Rhodenbaugh-LOOK
55, 56 -Eileen Darby-Graphic House
58, 59, 60, 61—Jackie Martin
62, 63 -Sprague Talbott-LOOK
65—Harold Rhodenbaugh-LOOK
70—Earl Theisen-LOOK
72 Dorothy Taylor-LOOK
73—(1, 3, 4, 8) Earl Theisen-LOOK; (2, 5) Dorothy Taylor-LOOK
74—British Information Services

This was Kubrick's first piece for *Look.* It appeared in the June 26, 1945 issue. Below it is Kubrick's name as it appeared in the acknowledgments for the same issue.

This is a transcript of the text that appears at the top of the following image:

A SHORT-SHORT IN A MOVIE BALCONY

To test a girl's reaction to the advances of an amorous stranger, a free-lance photographer and friend recently visited a Bronx movie. They selected a total stranger, and the photographer's friend sat down beside her. She was completely unaware that a photographer was recording the scene a few seats away on infra-red film. See below for what he recorded.

Antonia Brook Earle
1-Minute Mask
"my favorite beauty pick-me-up"
How to glamorize your complexion—in only one minute!
POND'S
A Short-Short in a Movie Balcony
He gives her the eye
She glares back
He slyly moves closer

This piece appeared on April 16, 1946, and already Kubrick is in the movie theater. Kubrick's interest in sexual obsession obviously predates *Lolita* and *Eyes Wide Shut!* The rather twisted sense of humor that is also a Kubrickian trademark also seems to have had deep roots. Lastly, the use of state-of-the-art camera techniques in *Barry Lyndon* seems to have been an outgrowth of the same drive that inspired Kubrick to use infra-red in this piece.

How a Monkey Looks to People . . . . . .

. . . . . and How People Look to a Monkey

This appeared on August 20, 1946. The photo of the monkey is credited to "Ylla-Guillumette," but the entire second page is Kubrick's. All it needs is a monolith. Humanity the "eternal savage," indeed!

Here is the text accompanying the next set of photos. Each line appears beneath the corresponding photo starting in the upper left hand corner, proceeding left to right down each page.

Should she wait - or run? It's a hard choice to make.

It hurts, and probing finger shows exactly where.

Resigned to his fate, he placidly sweats it out.

That thumping jaw keeps him oblivious of everything.

Okay, so it'll hurt! That tooth's got to come out.

He's enjoying a book, but she frowns unhappily.

He can concentrate on jaw and magazine at same time.

She can't see a thing, but that drill sounds awful.

Her composed face reflects patience and fortitude.

Picking old nail polish keeps her mind off pain.

Nothing he can do but wait, so he settles to read.

She's worried. Outgoing patient didn't look happy.

Dejected, she slumps in her chair. Hope seems gone.

On the alert! He keeps a sharp lookout at the door.

Restless, she broods - wonders whether it will hurt.

Something tells him that no good can come from this.

Well! What's the use of fretting about a tooth.

He seems to think it's all in how you look at it.

DENTIST'S OFFICE: Americans visit the dentist more often than any other people. But in the dentist's waiting room, they always look as if they want to be somewhere else.

Dentist's Office

Americans visit the dentist more often than any other

people. But in the dentist's waiting room, they always look as if they want to be somewhere else

All it needs is "We'll Meet Again" in the background... October 1, 1946.

TELEVISION:
It will start
to grow up

This scene is typical of the kind of action that today, for the first big growth that can be seen on most of the 10 or 12 television screens in the 10 or 40 miles where stations may be built in 1941, you'll be able to enjoy sights in your own home that you won't be able to see there as clearly as you can look at the theatre.

It is [illegible] for [illegible] has come for since pre-war days. If you become even a television [illegible] you'll be prepared.

The industry made great strides during the dreadful months of 1941. For the first time since the war, [illegible] began operating in New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Schenectady and Los Angeles, where commercial stations were operating. Construction permits had been granted for stations in 21 other cities in 16 states. Applications were on file for stations in [illegible] other cities. Sponsors began buying time. New developments in color transmission were announced late in 1941.

But many other developments, including the joining up of television networks and the [illegible] dollars. Unlike radio signals, television signals can be beamed only as far as the horizon—about 50 miles. They cannot be "piped" over existing telephone lines, as radio signals can. To solve this difficulty, the industry is experimenting with coaxial cables, relay towers set up at 40-mile intervals, and relays from stratosphere planes which [illegible] can be beamed 350 miles. Another approach to the network problem is Philoviscon, recently demonstrated by the De Mont Laboratories whose studio is shown above. In the process light and sound are converted into [illegible] a light beam instead of radio waves.

Television is here, and 1941 may be a significant year in its progress. But the craft will may some day be a giant in all the great parks.